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Investigators were able to determine the manner in which the body adjusts itself to famine. The starving body must use some of its own protein for fuel. The brain tissue loses a smaller fraction of its usual weight during a period of severe starvation whereas fat, muscle, liver, and skin in the body undergo large losses. The heart also undergoes a considerable loss of muscle mass during acute and chronic starvation. However, the body makes adaptations which safeguard the heart. The work done by the heart decreases about 50 per cent as a result of starvation.

The changes in the body enable it to meet the new situation more effectively than would otherwise be the case. The adaptations that occur in stressful situations are generally compromises. The changes due to semistarvation permit man to meet the altered situation with moderate success. Rigid dieting over brief periods of time cannot do serious harm to the human body because of the factors of safety that lie within the body itself.

Editorial: Human Adaptation to Semistarvation, Postgrad. Med. 8: 423-424 (November) 1950.

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